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SUBJECT: SKOPJE - ANNUAL OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
(OSAC) CRIME AND SAFETY REPORT

REF: 08 STATE 132056

11. Embassy Skopje's Regional Security Office submits the following information for the 2008 Annual OSAC Crime and Safety Report.

1I. OVERALL CRIME AND SAFETY SITUATION: Macedonia is a generally safe country with a low crime rate compared to the United States. Violence against foreigners is rare. However, theft is the primary crime perpetrated against Americans. Residential crime has been on the rise in recent years, targeting homes of wealthy residents, foreigners and diplomats. The primary safety hazard Americans face while in Macedonia is on the roadways. Widespread reckless driving has contributed to one of the world's highest per capita fatality rates from motor vehicle accidents.

II. POLITICAL VIOLENCE: Macedonia's political stability has markedly improved since the signing of the Framework Agreement that ended ethnically-based hostilities in 2001. The European Union's 2005 decision to grant Macedonia candidate status recognized the country's efforts to maintain peace and stability. There are no specific terrorist threats against Americans. Strikes and resulting roadblocks by citizens are not uncommon occurrences and should be avoided.

III. POST-SPECIFIC CONCERNS: Macedonia's location in a major earthquake region suggests the potential for natural disaster. The last major earthquake, in 1963, resulted in significant property damage and loss of life. Major flooding outside of the capital city of Skopje occurs regularly, especially in southern Macedonia. Macedonia's rate of motor vehicle-related fatalities is one of the highest in the world. This is due largely to the excessive speed of drivers, reckless driving habits, lack of seat belt use, and poor emergency medical response capabilities. Drivers should drive very defensively and exercise situational awareness when behind the wheel.

IV. POLICE RESPONSE: The police generally are responsive to requests for assistance from foreign crime victims. Crime victims should contact their embassy for assistance. Foreigners detained by the police should do the same. The emergency police number is 192, fire emergency is 193, and ambulance is 194.

1V. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES: Many Macedonian doctors are trained to Western standards. However, medical and hospital facilities and clinics lack equipment and supplies. While basic supplies are usually available, specialized treatment may not be. Not all ambulances have life-saving or sustaining equipment, and most can only transport a patient to an emergency room. Austrian Air Ambulance (43-1-40-44) and Tyrolean Air Ambulance (43-512-22-4-22), both based in Austria, can assist in a medical evacuation. The City Hospital, located at 11 Oktomvri Street in Skopje, can be contacted at 389 (0)2 313-0311. The Clinical Center is located on Vodnjanska Boulevard in Skopje and can be contacted at 289 (0)2 314-7147. Remedika, a new private clinic that largely follows Western standards, located at 16th Makedonska Brigada 18 in Skopje can be reached at 389 (0)2 260-3100.

VI. TIPS ON HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM: The most common

crime is pickpocketing and other crimes of opportunity, particularly in urban areas. Groups of street children will, on occasion, surround a tourist to beg for money while simultaneously relieving the individual of his or her wallet or other valuables. Americans rarely are the victims of violent crime. Guns and ammunition are common throughout the country. Organized crime groups occasionally engage in turf battles or revenge-type actions in bars and other public venues, which has resulted in some injuries to innocent bystanders. During major holidays, unregulated fireworks and gunfire can be heard throughout cities and the countryside alike. Credit card fraud is not uncommon in Macedonia. Credit cards can be used with relative security in larger Western-style establishments, such as hotels. However, credit cards are not recommended for use at smaller restaurants and shops. Valuables and credit cards should not be left unattended in hotel rooms or any other location. Doors and windows to hotel rooms and lodgings should be firmly secured when not in use. ATMs generally are safe to use as long as standard personal security precautions are exercised. There are many private security services and guard companies in Macedonia, many of which cater to bars, clubs, and cafes. There are several larger, well-known guard companies used by foreign embassies and companies to provide quality security guard services.

VII. EMBASSY CONTACT INFORMATION: The U.S. Embassy Skopje switchboard number is 389 (0)2 311-6180 (press 0 for the operator). The Regional Security Office, Consular Section, and Commercial Section can be contacted through the switchboard number. During non-business hours, this phone number rings through to Marine Security Guard Post 1. In case of emergency, American citizens should call the switchboard number and the call will be routed to the appropriate office or duty officer. At present, Macedonia does not have an OSAC Country Council, though there is a small American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) presence. AMCHAM can be contacted at 389 (0)2 321-6714.

VIII. OSAC COUNTRY COUNCIL: Post does not have an OSAC Country Council at this time.

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